

The President's Radio Address *April 12, 2003*

Good morning. Over the last several days, the world has watched as the regime of Saddam Hussein began passing into history. We will always remember the first images of a nation released from decades of tyranny and fear. The conflict continues in Iraq, and our military may still face hard fighting. Yet the statues of the dictator and all the works of his terror regime are falling away.

From the beginning and to this very hour, members of the American and coalition forces have conducted themselves with all the skill and honor we expect of them. Our enemies have seen their valor. The people of Iraq are seeing their compassion as our military provides food, water, and medical treatment to all in need, including captured Iraqi soldiers. As Army Master Sergeant Howard Kutcher of Delaware said of his service in the Middle East, "I am not here to conquer. I am here to help."

In one city, American soldiers encountered a crowd of Iraqi citizens who thought our troops were about to storm a nearby mosque. Just then, Lieutenant Colonel Chris Hughes ordered his men to get down on one knee and point their weapons to the ground. This gesture of respect helped defuse a dangerous situation and made our peaceful intentions clear.

Coalition forces have also come upon scenes that explain why fear runs so deep among the Iraqi people. In Baghdad on Tuesday, U.S. marines helped to free more than 100 children who, according to one report, had been jailed for refusing to join the dictator's Ba'ath Party youth organization. Malnourished and wearing rags, the children were overjoyed to see their parents and our liberating forces. In the words of Lieutenant Colonel Fred Padilla, commander of the 1st Battalion 5th Marines, "The children just streamed out of the gates, and their parents just started to em-

brace us." "Hundreds of kids," he said, "were swarming us and kissing us."

As Saddam's regime of fear is brought to an end, the people of Iraq are revealing the true hopes they have always held. It should surprise no one that Iraqis, like all people, resent oppression and welcome their own freedom. It should surprise no one that in every nation and every culture, the human heart desires the same good things, dignity, liberty, and a chance to build a better life.

As people throughout Iraq celebrate the arrival of freedom, America celebrates with them. We know that freedom is the gift of God to all mankind, and we rejoice when others can share it.

On Wednesday in central Baghdad, one of the Iraqi men who took a sledgehammer to the pedestal of the giant statue of Saddam had this to say: "I'm 49, but I never lived a single day. Only now will I start living."

Millions of Iraqis feel the same as their country is finally returned to them. The nightmare of Saddam Hussein's rule in Iraq is ending. Soon, the good and gifted people of Iraq will be free to choose their leaders who respect their rights and reflect their character. In all that is to come, they will have the good will of the entire world. And they will have the friendship of the people of the United States.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 10:12 a.m. on April 11 in the Cabinet Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on April 12. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on April 11 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. In his remarks, the President referred to former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq. The Office of the Press Secretary

also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Statement on Congressional Action on Emergency Wartime Supplemental Appropriations Legislation *April 12, 2003*

I am pleased that Congress moved quickly and with strong bipartisan support to pass my request for our military and to bolster our homeland defenses during Operation Iraqi Freedom. The world is witnessing the liberation of Iraq and the delivery of humanitarian aid to the Iraqi people

as a new day begins in their country. This legislation includes the resources necessary to win the war and help secure enduring freedom and democracy for the Iraqi people. I look forward to working with the Congress as we make progress in the war and in providing aid to the people of Iraq.

Remarks on the Rescue of U.S. Prisoners of War and an Exchange With Reporters *April 13, 2003*

The President. Today is a great day for the families, comrades, loved ones of the seven missing in action who are free. I'm really pleased, for all those who have been praying for their safety, that they are safe.

We still have missing in action in Iraq; we will continue to look for them. We pray that they too will be safe and free one of these days. But it's just a good way to start off the morning, to have been notified that seven of our fellow Americans are going to be home here pretty soon, in the arms of their loved ones.

I'll answer a few questions. Scott [Scott Lindlaw, Associated Press].

Syria

Q. Mr. President, Secretary Rumsfeld said today he thinks Syria is harboring some Iraqi leadership. Could Syria face military action if they harbor these people?

The President. Well, Syria just needs to cooperate with us. We've made—I made that clear on Friday. I will, if need be, reiterate it today. The Syrian Government

needs to cooperate with the United States and our coalition partners and not harbor any Ba'athists, any military officials, any people who need to be held to account for their tenure during what we are learning more and more about. It was one of the most horrendous governments ever.

Q. Could they face military action if they don't cooperate?

The President. They just need to cooperate.

Prayer

Q. You have been talking a lot about prayer, and today is Palm Sunday. What role do you think faith and prayer had in this rescue?

The President. I think it played—first of all, I know it helps sustain and comfort those who mourn, those who are worried, those who are concerned about their loved ones. You know, I went to the hospital on Friday and met some of our brave troops and their families. And a lot of them told me that they had been sustained by prayer,